

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A method for removing fluid from the intestinal tract of a host by directly delivering an effective amount of water-absorbent polymer to the intestinal tract.

5           2. The method of claim 1 wherein the polymer is enterically coated and the method of deliver is oral administration.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the polymer is capable of absorbing at least about 10 times its weight in physiological saline.

10           4. The method of claim 3 wherein the polymer is capable of absorbing at least 20 times its weight in physiological saline.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein the polymer is capable of absorbing at least 30 times its weight in physiological saline

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the polymer is capable of absorbing at least 40 times its weight in physiological saline.

15           7. The method of claim 1 wherein the polymer is formed by polymerizing acrylate containing monomers.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the polymer is formed by polymerizing monomer comprising acrylic acid or salts thereof.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the polymer is a polysaccharide.

20           10. The method of claim 1 wherein the polymer includes functional groups for selectively absorbing blood borne waste products.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the polymer includes functional groups for selectively absorbing urea.

25           12. The method of claim 10 wherein the polymer includes functional groups for selectively absorbing phosphate.

13. The method of claim 2 wherein the enteric coating selected from at least one of: hydroxypropylmethylcellulose, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose phthalate, methacrylic acid polymers, or polymers of derivatives of methacrylic acid.

30           14. The method of claim 2 wherein the polymer is placed within an enterically coated capsule.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein the enteric coating is selected from at least one of: hydroxypropylmethylcellulose, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose phthalate, methacrylic acid polymers, or polymers of derivatives of methacrylic acid.

16. A method for treating fluid overload states in a host by directly delivering an effective amount of a water-absorbent polymer to the intestinal tract.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein the polymer is enterically coated and the method of delivery is oral administration.

18. The method of claim 16 wherein the fluid overload state is selected from at least one of: edema, congestive heart failure, ascites, and renal insufficiency.

19. A composition for removing fluid from the intestinal tract of a host comprising an enterically coated, non-systemic, non-toxic, water-absorbing polymer capable of absorbing at least 10 times its weight in physiological saline.

20. The composition of claim 19 wherein the polymer is capable of absorbing at least 20 times its weight in physiological saline.

21. The composition of claim 20 wherein the polymer is capable of absorbing at least 30 times its weight in physiological saline.

22. The composition of claim 21 wherein the polymer is capable of absorbing at least 40 times its weight in physiological saline.

23. The composition of claim 19 wherein the polymer is formed by polymerizing acrylate containing monomers.

24. The composition of claim 19 wherein the polymer is formed by polymerizing monomer comprising acrylic acid or salts thereof.

25. The composition of claim 19 wherein the polymer is a polysaccharide.

26. The composition of claim 19 wherein the polymer is a crosslinked polyallylamine

27. The composition of claim 19 wherein the polymer is provided in bead form.